

RECOGNIZING MS. MINNIE LOPEZ-BAFFO

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ms. Minnie Lopez-Baffo, the first Latina appointed to serve on the California Contractors State Licensing Board, as she completes her last term on the Board.

As a member of the California Contractors State Licensing Board since 1995, Ms. Lopez-Baffo has worked on legislation and consumer education committees utilizing her knowledge and expertise to educate and protect California consumers. While she served as Board Chair from July 2001 through June 2002, Ms. Lopez-Baffo was known as a fair and impartial leader and a dedicated guardian of the rights of consumers.

Ms. Lopez-Baffo is an exemplarily leader whose diligent work and dedication to her community inspired others to work hard. I am honored to call her my friend and I commend her for her vision and dedication to advocate on behalf of California's consumers.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, on July 27th of last year this body made a bipartisan commitment to American workers who lose their jobs on account of international competition.

Part of this commitment was that the government would provide for 65 percent of their healthcare costs.

Another part of this commitment was that an insurer could not deny them coverage on account of their age, pre-existing conditions or any other arbitrary reason.

The bill under consideration today undermines these protections and allow insurers to arbitrarily avoid covering them.

The consumer protections that are law ensure everyone eligible for the tax credit can actually claim it, regardless of their age or health status.

Many who will qualify for the TAA benefit are older workers and retirees who are more likely to have significant health care needs.

Today's bill is particularly awful because it strips healthcare coverage from those who need it most.

This is not the time to revisit TAA, when commitments to the current program share broad bipartisan support and the current law has yet to be fully implemented.

I urge you to oppose this bill and reaffirm your commitment to the American worker.

TO HONOR JUNETEENTH

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Juneteenth. The freedom to have a

family. The freedom to live anywhere. The freedom, simply, to have a last name. Those freedoms arrived June 19, 1865, to black slaves in Texas. While we celebrate Juneteenth in 2003, it is helpful to look back at our history to fully appreciate the great obstacles that many faced in their struggle to pursue life, liberty, and happiness.

While President Abraham Lincoln technically ended the right to own another human being in 1863, most slaves gained their freedom only when Union troops took control of Confederate territory and released them from forced bondage. It took two and one-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation for the Union army to reach Texas. Union General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston and announced to the State's 200,000 slaves that they were free. They immediately erupted into a jubilant celebration, much like the Fourth of July.

Although Juneteenth originated in Texas, it is being celebrated throughout our Nation. Today, Juneteenth commemorates African-American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future.

Part of that assessment means looking at where we stand today. Americans, including African-Americans, face ever growing challenges. We face economic crisis and a lack of access to healthcare for millions of Americans. We must work together to make sure that workers make a living wage and that children get the healthcare they need.

As we look ahead, I challenge all of you to take this opportunity, while we honor the rich history of this celebration of freedom, to rededicate ourselves to the value of equal opportunity for all Americans. That is at the heart of Juneteenth and the American ideal.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STRENGTHEN AMERICORPS PROGRAM ACT OF 2003

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act of 2003, to strengthen the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps program. This bill will not only address the Corporation's recent accounting problems, but more importantly, it will protect and expand volunteer service opportunities in my State of Maryland and across our Nation. It is identical to S. 1276, which the Senate passed yesterday. S. 1276 was introduced by Senator Christopher Bond of Missouri and my colleague from Maryland, Senator Barbara Mikulski, and I appreciate their leadership. We must act now to save this important program.

The President has asked every American to volunteer in their communities and has made the AmeriCorps program a central vehicle in meeting volunteer needs. The AmeriCorps program can play an important and effective role in improving the lives of many Americans and communities it serves.

But I have heard from many of my constituents who are concerned about the potential cuts to the AmeriCorps program. If we fail to

act, next year's Maryland program will be slashed from 452 AmeriCorps members to 52 members. Nationwide the number of AmeriCorps members will be radically cut as well.

Maryland's 8th District, which I am proud to represent, has a highly successful AmeriCorps program, Project CHANGE. Project CHANGE was developed in conjunction with the President of Montgomery College, Charlene Nunley, the Superintendent of Schools for Montgomery County, Jerry Weast, and leaders from the County's non-profit, immigrant and business communities. If we don't act, it is likely that Montgomery County will lose Project CHANGE together with the great work that its 20 AmeriCorps members are performing on behalf of our neediest students and families.

TRIBUTE TO TINA ROBLES

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before this body of Congress and this nation today to pay tribute to a remarkable woman from my district. Tina Robles of Grand Junction, Colorado just celebrated her 87th birthday, and as her family and friends mark the occasion, I would like to honor Tina here today.

Tina and her family embody the American dream. As Mexican-Americans, Sarah and her late husband Antonia raised their family to believe in the undying spirit of our great nation. They are proud of their dual heritage and have taught their kids that in order to succeed in America you need dedication, patience, and perseverance. At the same time, the family has maintained pride in their culture as Mexican-Americans, enriching this country while celebrating their diverse heritage. Today, Tina is the matriarch of a sizable extended family. With 14 children, 52 grandkids, 60 great-grandchildren, and even 5 great-great-grandkids, there is plenty of love to go around. However, even with so many relatives, Tina holds a special place in each of their hearts—I know they each join me in celebrating her 87 years.

Mr. Speaker, Tina Robles's ability to raise a large, loving, and successful family exemplifies the characteristics that helped build this great country. I am truly honored to recognize her here today. I congratulate Tina for her success, wish her a happy birthday, and thank her for being such an outstanding role model for today's families. So what happened? The reason is simple—last year, the Corporation over-enrolled the AmeriCorps program by more than 20,000 and the Bush Administration took money from the National Service Education Trust, which is used to pay the education stipends of AmeriCorps members following their service. The OMB and GAO have declared that this money must be paid back using the coming year's appropriated funds.

The GAO has identified several factors that led to the Corporation's incorrect accounting practice. The factors included inappropriate obligation practices, little or no communication among key Corporation executives, too much flexibility given to grantees regarding enrollments, unreliable data on the number of AmeriCorps participants, and not following the law in recording its legal liabilities.